

text
Sarah Buitendach



Sarah Buitendach is contributing editor to the Financial Mail.



ECLECTIBLES. Progressing to pilgrim

With a father in the ICU for weeks, I have watched a lot of TV. No, scratch that. In between doctor's calls and autopilot drives to the hospital, I have watched all the tv.

Good and bad, the small screen has offered endless, mindless solace. By chance, it gave me an idea, as well. If you're also tiptoeing with trepidation into 2022, it is one that might appeal to you too.

During one channel-flipping deep-dive, I stumbled upon a rerun of a 2018 show called *The Pilgrimage: Road to Santiago*. In it seven British celebs (Heather Small of the band M People, for example) walk the famous Camino de Santiago. The gang takes on the 780km route across northern

Spain over 15 days. The show documents this and their personal experiences. There's plenty of complaining about "more walking", but also a lot about the places they visit. It's fascinating stuff.

It is true that, because the walk is based on early Christian pilgrimages, it originally gained popularity as a journey of spiritual importance undertaken by people of that faith, but over the centuries that has changed. Every year the route attracts over 200 000 people, so you probably know someone who's attempted all or a part of this march already. I even know someone who met her future husband on the trail.

Today pilgrims traipse through Spanish towns and the countryside, collecting stamps in their pilgrim

passports and sleeping in modest accommodation for many reasons, irrespective of religion. They trek for spiritual purposes, to grapple with questions to which they need answers, to tackle grief, for the surrounds, to hang out with friends – or even because they like a good walk.

Many pilgrims return to the Camino de Santiago again and again, but there's an entire industry of equivalent enlightened sojourns across the globe. Researching it, I tumbled into a cavern of caminos (or "ways", as the word translates). You've got hundreds of purposeful, meaningful walks to choose from. Portugal, Japan, Wales, even Australia, have their own established pilgrim routes and, here's the thing, so do we.

There are several smaller organised

trails dotted around the country, but it's the Cape Camino that has caught my eye. The full route runs over 640km, takes 36 days to complete, and incorporates areas such as the winelands, the Sandveld and the Cape Peninsula. It is, however, popular to do the walk in seven-day chunks.

This pilgrimage seems a no-brainer – you get to take time out, reflect, and meet new people. Plus, there's cracking South African weather, spectacular scenery, and sacred sites, including shrines, kramats, and caves.

I really like it that, on the Cape Camino, pilgrims break the journey in mostly rural communities, and are chaperoned by locals along the route. As Peggy Coetzee-Andrew, the operations manager for the Cape Camino, explains, "The Camino has been greeted by communities with gratitude and enthusiasm. Many jobs have been created over the 640km, but hosts see the value not just in the financial benefits but also in being part of this global concept."

She goes on to add, "For many of us, our busy lives are filled with anxiety and loneliness. Walking the Cape Camino gives you purpose and the feeling of connection. It is a challenge and at the end you'll know how strong and capable you are."

It may not include the luxuries of high thread-count bedding and fancy restaurants, but, as we try to slough off the last two years of Covid-induced crazy, doesn't a home-style personal pilgrimage sound like just the reset we all need?

55 The percentage of global emissions that can be addressed through renewable energy, with the remaining 45% coming from the production of food, cars, clothing, and generic products.

80 The increase in percentage in extreme weather events over the past 20 years.

5 The average number of people killed by sharks every year.

30 573 The number of false or misleading claims by former president Donald Trump during his four years in office, according to the Washington Post's Fact Checker Team.

75 The percentage of plastic waste that is collected for recycling — only 9% of all plastic gets recycled.

8 The percentage of the world's oil production that is used to manufacture plastic.

A NUMBERS GAME

text
Declan Gibbon

48 The number of deaths worldwide every year as a result of air pollution, chemical exposure, or other environmental risks.

15-20 The percentage of crops that depend on animal pollinators. A total of 90% of wild plants depend on animal pollinators.

100 000 000 The average number of sharks killed by people every year.

2 200 000 The tons of solid waste produced globally every year, consisting of 44% food and organics, 17% paper, and 12% plastic.

13.7 million The number of deaths worldwide every year as a result of air pollution, chemical exposure, or other environmental risks.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

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The percentage of global emissions that can be addressed through renewable energy, with the remaining 45% coming from the production of food, cars, clothing, and generic products.

80

The increase in the percentage of extreme weather events over the past 20 years.

1 000

The kilograms of CO₂ that are emitted in the production of 1kg of beef. The same amount of pork accounts for 24kg.

3 000

The litres of water needed per person per day to live comfortably — 50l for drinking and cleaning, 100l for washing clothes, and 2 500l to produce the food we eat.

50

The number of metres by which sea levels will rise if we lose Antarctica's ice cap.

15-20

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15-20

The percentage of plastic waste that is collected for recycling — only 9% of all plastic gets recycled.

728 789

The estimated number of plastic microfibres released when washing one load of acrylic fabrics.

70

The percentage of global clothing donations that end up in Africa, where they ruin local textile industries, cause rampant pollution, and impact infrastructure.

75

The percentage of crops that depend on animal pollinators.

2 000 000 000

the tonnes of solid waste produced globally every year, consisting of 44% food and organics, 17% paper, and 12% plastic.

48/13

The UN Human Rights resolution that formally recognises access to a healthy environment as a fundamental

13 700 000

The number of deaths worldwide every year as a result of air pollution, chemical exposure, or other environmental risks.

